

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Tuesday, April 7, 2009

1:30 p.m.

I feel honored that so many Michigan public officials and higher education leaders have generously joined us today: the Governor's and Mayor's offices, Wayne State University Board of Governors, University of Miami President Donna Shalala; Wayne State University Presidents Emeriti David Adamany and Irv Reid; University of Nebraska Chancellor Hal Maurer, Illinois State University President Al Bowman, and colleague presidents from our sister universities in Michigan— Grand Valley State President Tom Haas, Macomb Community College President Jim Jacobs, University of Michigan—Dearborn Chancellor Dan Little, Lawrence Tech University President Lewis Walker. Thank you all for being here today.

And a special thank you to Donna Shalala for her kind remarks. As you heard from Provost Barrett, Donna Shalala's accomplishments are remarkable both in higher ed and national government. Some of us have the good fortune of a generous mentor during our careers. My luck came from serving as Vice Chancellor at Wisconsin when Donna was Chancellor. I learned from her directly and by example, and I will always cherish those lessons. I have to admit—those lessons have kept me out of trouble many times—though I must also admit I have not always stayed out of trouble.

And thank all of you in the audience for attending—I am quite surprised and pleased to see so many people here today.

I want to express a special thank you to my family for being here: my wife Sheri, our children Liz, Olin, Kristoffer and his wife Natalia, and my brother Jim.

Let me begin with a question—why are we here today? In part because of a long tradition in universities—the inauguration event. But that's not the real reason we're here. We're here to underscore why universities exist, and specifically Wayne State's purpose. And while our existence serves many complex purposes, the central purposes can be simply stated.

We exist for two basic reasons: 1) to nurture and develop students' capacity to thrive in the complex world in which they live, now and into the unpredictable future, and 2) to explore creative solutions to the problems and challenges faced by the world's population.

The question for today is--how will Wayne State address those critical university purposes in its future? I think there are four core emphases that uniquely define Wayne State's most significant current and future contributions:

1. Educational Opportunity.....**Immersed in Diversity**
2. Research and Outreach...**Focused on the Challenges of America's Great Cities**
3. A Central Educational Goal...**Instilling in our Students a Lifelong Commitment to Citizenship Through Community Activism...with Special Urban Insights**
4. Economic Development....**particularly for Metropolitan Detroit and Michigan**

I would like to briefly expand on these four Wayne State emphases.

Educational opportunity immersed in diversity.

Similar to most urban universities, we are committed to the full range of student success—including gifted young men and women in our Honors College and students who are disadvantaged economically or educationally, as is common among students in Detroit Public Schools. This is a special role—but particularly important at Wayne State because we are not only an urban campus, but also because in our research enterprise we rank among the top 10 urban universities in the country. Therefore we have special role of innovation and research on educational effectiveness across this broad student spectrum.

Our student body is among the most diverse in America, with

African-American, Middle Eastern, Mexican American, and Asian students making up almost 50% of our enrollment. This rich diversity gives our students a remarkable advantage as they graduate to life in a world of massive cultural and ethnic integration, where national boundaries have become secondary—if not practically irrelevant—to the inexorable forces of international commerce.

One of our foremost goals is to increase our ability to fund both need-based and merit-based scholarships.

Sixty years ago President Harry Truman's Commission on Higher Education stated its central principle that... **every citizen should have the opportunity to pursue higher education to the fullest extent of his or her abilities and energy.** That principle was right then.... and remains correct today. Unfortunately, since the Truman Commission 50 years ago, we have diminished our commitment to educational access at the state and federal level. It is critical that we reenergize it --nationally and in Michigan --and continually at Wayne State. Our sustained democratic society, economic productivity, and quality of life depend upon that educational commitment.

Wayne State is committed to access through financial aid. This year we made about 16,000 undergraduate scholarship offers, a figure equal to nearly 80 percent of our undergraduate population. The average scholarship award came to

more than \$9,000, which is more than our tuition cost.

I was a first-generation college student, and scholarships and loans, plus state appropriations that made tuition very affordable, were critical to the degrees I earned. Since my time as a student, some four decades ago, state higher ed appropriations have dropped dramatically and financial aid has also not kept pace---placing higher education out of reach for far too many students. At Wayne State we feel that underwriting student scholarships is of primary importance.

We have shifted some of our present institutional funds to assist students that are facing financial difficulties resulting from the nation's current economic recession. Next fall we will use **one-time** funding to **double** the need-based grants we offer to all freshmen, as well as to those sophomores, juniors and seniors who have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or greater. We hope to continue this enhanced financial aid in future years through private fund raising.

Research and outreach confronting the problems of America's great cities

This is both a challenging... and an exciting time.... in Wayne State and Detroit's history. Many of the problems our society faces are felt most keenly in metropolitan areas like Detroit. As Michigan's **only urban research** university, Wayne State's specialized resources address the challenges of urban life

through efforts such as creative city planning, alternative energy, mass transit including light rail, K-12 education, delivery of health care and human services to underserved populations, workforce retooling, and economic development in many forms.

Addressing these challenges will take new approaches, new paths to solutions. There's an old saying: **The beaten path is the safest, but traffic's terrible.** We need to stay ahead of the traffic.

In that vein there is a new Detroit endeavor in which Wayne State is engaged—it's called "CEOs for Cities." This is a national organization of major US cities that we joined just this past fall. It involves a leadership team of CEOs from each member city that meets regularly to share ideas addressing major urban challenges.

I serve on the Detroit team representing Wayne State with other CEOs from Hudson-Webber Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Detroit Renaissance, Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, DTE, Henry Ford, Detroit Medical Center, and others.

And Wayne State is now working collaboratively, through CEO's for Cities, with two other Woodward Corridor institutional anchors, the Detroit Medical Center and Henry Ford Health System.... on new revitalization projects in Midtown and the Woodward Corridor.

We all know that America's great cities face major challenges in K-12 education. Detroit is no exception

with overall high school graduation rates below 45%... **and among African American males the graduation rate is the lowest in the nation at 20%**. At Wayne State we are acutely aware of the challenge, and therefore we have more than 100 programs targeted for enhanced success of K-12 students in the Detroit Public Schools.

Revitalizing America's K-12 system is a very steep mountain to climb. But it's essential to America's future that we climb it... **and we do so fast**. As Arnold Bennet said, "It's easier to go down a hill than up, but the view is much better at the top." Around the world there are many countries closer to the top in K-12 education than the US—we need to hurry up.

We also know that research is essential to discovering creative solutions to challenges faced by "America's Great Cities." And I firmly believe that Wayne State is more well-placed strategically to provide innovative solutions to these challenges... **than any other university in the country**.

I think that for three reasons: 1) our well-developed research expertise particularly on urban issues, 2) our historical engagement in metro Detroit and the trust that has established throughout the area, and 3) Detroit itself, which faces **all** the challenges of "America's Great Cities" and in many cases more intensely than most. In fact those intense challenges are a unique opportunity—for innovation and engagement on urban issues. The

rich history of Detroit and today's challenges offer **huge advantages as both a powerful classroom and a laboratory for research** of major importance to the entire country.

Let me give you some of Wayne State's credentials as a national research institution:

- We rank among the nation's top 50 public universities in research expenditures – at nearly \$253 million per year. That puts Wayne State in the highest research category among American universities, a distinction held by only 3½ percent of US institutions of higher education. In Michigan only Wayne State, University of Michigan and Michigan State qualify for this category.
- And among urban universities Wayne State's research ranks it in the top 10 nationally.
- Two years ago, Wayne State, Michigan State University and the University of Michigan formed a partnership in research and development we call the "University Research Corridor" (URC for short)—an alliance for invention, innovation and technology transfer aimed at regional economic development. Together, our three URC institutions bring in more than \$1.3 billion in research funding every year, 95 percent of all academic research and development grants at work in Michigan.

We are the youngest of only seven such university consortia in the country. The others include member universities such as Harvard, MIT, Stanford, University of California-Berkley, and others. Yet we already are ahead of three or four of the other six on major R&D benchmarks.

Instilling lifelong commitment to citizenship in our students through urban engagement

Wayne State seeks to excite in its students a commitment to lifelong citizenship through urban community activism, engagement in the public policy process, and informed leadership emphasizing urban issues.

This is a long tradition at Wayne State that we consider a major educational priority. We accomplish it both as a central focus of our Honors College and throughout all majors by emphasizing service learning and community-based student projects and activism in the city of Detroit. It starts with freshmen orientation and continues throughout the undergraduate experience.

Why is it so important that our students become smart about community activism? Because the future of our democratic society depends upon them. Someone recently stated the importance in somewhat edgy, but I think persuasive language, this way: It's very expensive to make a smart bomb. It's much cheaper to make smart kids -- and if you do so it's unnecessary to make smart bombs.

Economic development targeting metropolitan Detroit and Michigan.

When Michigan returns to economic health, it will be because we act now to build, nurture and attract knowledge-based economic ventures. At Wayne State we're doing so both through our research enterprise and through TechTown, our business incubator park, which now hosts 70 start-up companies and is planning for 300. TechTown also will soon be home to cutting edge research and economic development in biomedical sciences through Michigan's first stem cell commercialization lab, a collaboration with our URC partners, U of M and MSU.

Additionally our TechTown "Soft Landings" program helps foreign companies explore business opportunities in Michigan through support services such as interpreters, office space, and business support services. For example, we have partnerships with the Mexican government and currently 25 Mexican start-up companies are operating on site in TechTown.

We at Wayne State are an essential contributor to Michigan's economy. Everywhere you go in Michigan you meet Wayne State graduates. More than 75 percent of our 235,000 alumni live in Michigan.

We have the largest single-campus medical school in the country. About 30 percent of practicing physicians in Michigan, and 43 percent in metro Detroit, received

all or part of their medical training at Wayne State. More than 75 percent of the Law School's alumni live and work in Michigan.

It has been said, **without Wayne State Michigan could not open for business each day.**

I will close with a few musings about the future. Daniel Burnham, an architect and urban planner who greatly influenced past development in Chicago, Cleveland, San Francisco and Washington, once said, "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will not be realized." So let's plan big and hopefully stir energetic and creative passions among those we touch.

Here are a few idea and plans for the future in two categories: 1) Wayne State-specific and 2) national in scope.

First, near-term Wayne State-specific plans:

A Center for Urban Research, Engagement and Education. We have a task force working on plans for this center right now.

Also,a major Wayne State role in K-12 education in Detroit. We are exploring development of collaboration with Detroit Public Schools for alternative approaches to urban K-12 education. We have explored ideas with the State of Michigan Superintendent of Education, the University of Chicago Institute for Urban Education, and the Clinton Global Initiative-Universities, all of which

have indicated an interest in this challenge. We currently have a task force addressing this plan with representatives from eight disciplines throughout the university.

In another venture, we are considering a Center for Middle East Studies and Diplomacy. Metropolitan Detroit is blessed with the largest and most diverse populations in the US representing Middle Eastern ethnic and cultural groups. The potential is huge for creative dialogue and problem-solving on issues troubling the Middle East. Key Wayne State and Detroit-area resources include our Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, the Cohn-Haddow Center for Judaic Studies, International Studies Program, Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce, Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services, and others.

Additionally we are committed to collaboration with metro Detroit community colleges on education programs with high employment potential. For example in January we began a major expansion of our partnership with Macomb Community College through development of an Advanced Technology Education Center on the community college's South Campus. The Center will provide six new undergraduate programs, as well as graduate programs in Engineering Management and Labor Relations.

Finally, today we are announcing a new fundraising campaign designed to increase the number

and dollar amount of need- and merit-based scholarships. The initial seeds for this new campaign come from the generosity of Wayne State friends who contributed to this inauguration ceremony. The \$26,000 in gifts received exceeded our expectations so we decided to use those funds to establish a new need-based scholarship as one part of the overall scholarship campaign. We call the new inauguration scholarship the "Wayne Higher Aims Scholarship." To this seed fund we have added all scholarship funding received since January, which brings our current total to \$292,000; so we are off to a good start in opening the doors of Wayne State to students needing a financial escalator to education.

Now I will turn briefly to some thoughts on future higher education directions from a national perspective.

First, creation of a National Trust Fund for Higher Education. Twice in American history we have confronted major challenges by investment in permanent federal resources for enhanced quality of life for the public good. In the 1930's President Franklin Roosevelt led implementation of the Social Security Trust Fund that has preserved dignity and financial security for American society for three-quarters of a century. In the late 1960s President Lyndon Johnson led creation of the Medicare Trust Fund, providing assurance that older American's would not face poverty from the misfortune of serious illness.

I believe we have reached a crossroads in history at which comprehensive access to higher education demands a new Federal Trust Fund for Higher Education. In our current system funding for higher education tracks the national economy in exactly the wrong direction. In cycles of economic downturn like the recession we now face, when recovery depends upon education and innovation, we consistently and recurrently decrease higher education funding when just the opposite is demanded. A national higher education trust fund would address this serious conflict between need and resources and thereby more effectively shorten and reverse periods of economic downturn that are best treated by assuring continued production of skilled human capital.

Second, a cabinet-level federal Department of Urban Affairs with funding to address the challenges of America's Great Cities.

Third, creation of urban land grant universities built on the 19th century model of agricultural land grant universities so well represented by Michigan State University. Land-grant universities were created by the Morrill Act in 1862 and funded by granting federal lands to the states. These lands provided by the federal government served as a major economic resource for the universities. The land-grant universities were the beginning of America's world preeminence in higher education and research and continue to be preeminent today. They were the economic drivers of

America's 19th and 20th century research and development enterprise in agriculture. And the best of the land grants, like MSU, continue today as national leaders in research and development far beyond agriculture.

In fact, a logical parallel is dramatically illustrated in Detroit. America's urban areas all face issues of neighborhood blight—land, housing stock and business buildings in deteriorated condition. This land, like the federal lands in 1862, has much potential value, but not unless it is revitalized. So that land and those buildings could be provided to urban universities, with the expectation that the universities will develop them, with the aid of philanthropic foundations as well as local, state, and federal government.

I'll conclude my comments with a poem that captures for me the essence of the university--it's called "The Bridge Builder." I ask you to think of the old man in the poem as symbolizing the university and think of the youth in the poem as symbolizing the two purposes of a university that I mentioned at the beginning of my comments: 1) to nurture and develop students' capacity and 2) to provide creative problem solving for the future.

The Bridge Builder

An old man going to a lone highway
Came at the evening cold and gray
To a chasm vast and deep and wide.

The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The sullen stream had no fears for him.
But he turned when safe on the other side
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man" said a fellow pilgrim near,
"You are wasting your time with building here.
You never again will pass this way --
Your journey will end with the closing day.
You have crossed the chasm deep and wide;
Why build you this bridge at eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head.
"Good friend, in the way that I've come," he said.
"There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This stream that has been as naught to me,
To the fair-haired youth might a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I'm building the bridge for him."

-Will Allen Dromgoole

Universities are, first and foremost, bridge builders--from the past and present to the future.

Thank you.